

# VANGUARD

NOVEMBER, 1937

Vol. 4, No. 1

## ANDRE GIDE ANSWERS HIS BOLSHEVIK CRITICS

Dorothy Dudley

David Lawrence

S. Morrison

Senex

Victor Serge

Sam Weiner

Roman Weinrebe

Jack White

David Lawrence on

## WHO SLEW PROLET CULT?

Victor Serge tells the

## TRUTH ABOUT KRONSTADT

## The F.A.I. Presents Its Position

## WHAT IS LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM?

and other timely articles

# EDITORIALS

## What the Chicago Haymarket Martyrs Fought and Died for

On November 11, 1887, fifty years ago, the working class of America paid for its struggle against Mammon with the sacrifice of the Chicago Martyrs — Parsons, Spies, Fischer, Engel and Lingg. In the words of the prosecuting attorney, "Anarchism was on trial". The frame-up charge connecting them with the bombing at Haymarket was never proven. But even before the jury verdict was received, the Chicago Tribune started a campaign to collect \$100,000 to pay the jurors for their grateful verdict!

The ideas for which these men stood stamp them definitely as fearless libertarians; they were comrades who gladly sacrificed their lives in the struggle for emancipation of labor. The columns of "The Alarm", edited by Albert Parsons, contain numerous editorials giving the revolutionary libertarian opinions of these fighters:

"Anarchy would place (upon the ruins of existing class rule) a 'free society', based upon the cooperative organization of production... The various occupations and individuals would voluntarily associate to conduct the processes of distribution and production... The trade unions, assemblies and other labor organizations are but the initial groups of a free society."

"Education within the reach of all."

"Equal rights for all. No right without duties. No duties without rights."

"All public affairs would be regulated by free contracts between the autonomous communes or groups, resting on a federalist basis."

"The Free Society is an abrogation of all forms of political government.

"No compromise is possible. We must choose between freedom and slavery. The International defiantly unfurls the banner of liberty, fraternity, equality, and beneath its scarlet folds beckons the disinherited to assemble and strike down the property beast which feasts upon the life blood of the people."

With these unequivocal words did our comrades strike out against the exploiting system of capitalism. And like their sublimely heroic heirs in Spain today, our comrades of the C.N.T.-F.A.I., the words of the Chicago martyrs are being misrepresented and their achievements either denied or misused by politicians and renegades. How few are the friends of labor in this country who today share their revolutionary views. But how many are the traitors who do not hesitate to commemorate their martyrdom, to claim them as their own and thus desecrate the very ideals for which our comrades died. The words of Parsons quoted here are just as applicable now as they were fifty years ago. The Libertarian Communist movement is the true heir of these sentiments. That these ideals may live and bear fruit, that their martyred comrades shall not have died in vain, the Libertarian Communist movement must be reinvigorated and strengthened in America, the path of liberty must be opened wide for the working class to make the world its own! To this task we dedicate ourselves.

## Significance of C.I.O.-A.F.L. Unity Moves

All is not well, apparently in the C.I.O. Otherwise why would they be trying to join hands with their most bitter opponents on the craft side of the union camp? The genuine mass revolt of millions of American workers which swelled the ranks of the C.I.O. is not to be squelched or channeled so easily. The second ingredient in the peculiar com-

pound that forms the C.I.O. is a powerful, bureaucratic, but shrewd apparatus that was seeking a more progressive and viable form of unionism needed to break loose from the fetters of a rapidly decaying craft structure that threatened to put the entire old-line leadership on the shelf.

In this same spirit of self-preservation they shy away in fright from the proportions which this mass revolt is assuming. Moreover, the close political alliance of the C.I.O. with the Roosevelt administration prevents it from putting too much faith in its rank and file. It was, therefore, quite natural for them to feel a certain nostalgia for the good A.F. of L. This found a response in certain "left" elements within the A.F. of L., that is, those who are beginning to realize the suicidal nature of Green's policy of fighting the C.I.O. Taken together with Roosevelt's influence on both factions, this may bring them together under New Deal tutelage.

What will be the outcome of the present negotiations is not, of course, being predicted here. But if the rupture is healed, the C.I.O. will no doubt become a more "safe and sane" outfit, with industrial unions resembling more closely the moderate European unions which rely rather on political influence than on the militancy of its members.

The forces of mass revolt so profoundly disturbing the American scene have not yet found adequate expression. This is the task of libertarians which is now more clearly and urgently outlined than at any other time in recent years.

## Defend Ferrero and Sallitto

The lives of two intrepid anti-Fascists, Ferrero and Sallitto, hang on a delicate balance. We bring to the attention of our readers the horrible fate that awaits them at the hands of Mussolini if we do not intensify our efforts to prevent the government from deporting them to Italy. To our new readers we outline briefly the "charge" against them:

Vincent Ferrero and Domenick Sallitto came legally to the United States and have resided continuously in this country for 32 and 16 years respectively. They were arrested in Oakland, California, in April 1934, shortly before the general strike in San Francisco. It is now a well established fact that they were arrested as part of a plan by government officials to suppress the anarchist publication *Man!* at that time printed in California. Ferrero and Sallitto had allowed the editor of that publication to use the address of a small restaurant they were operating as the correspondence address for the magazine. This and their interest in anti-Fascist and labor movements gave the immigration agents an apparently good excuse to prefer arbitrary charges against the two individuals and institute deportation proceedings against them.

An estimate of 15,000 individual protests and over 800 organizations with an aggregate membership running into hundreds of thousands, have demanded the cancellation of the warrants against Ferrero and Sallitto. The Department of Labor has been adamant thus far. The danger of deportation is ever present and the Ferrero-Sallitto Defense Conference is appealing for assistance and for an increase in the number of protests to the Secretary of Labor. The Conference's address: P.O. Box 181, Station D, New York City.

## Marcus Graham Arrested

On October 6, 1937 Marcus Graham, editor of *Man!*, was arrested, searched and his home broken into without even the legal form of a warrant. After being brutally tormented by his jailors he is now out on bail awaiting further hearings. The many-year old campaign of the Federal authorities to deport Marcus Graham and to suppress this journal and thus drive a deep wedge into freedom of the press

(Continued on page 19)

# Vanguard

Published by the Vanguard Group, 45 W. 17th St., New York City. Subscription in U.S. one dollar (\$1.00) a year (12 issues). Foreign \$1.25. Single copies 10 cts.

Volume 4 - Number 1

\* 255

November, 1937

## A Premature Luther

By DOROTHY DUDLEY

EVEN in the early years of the Soviet world there were protagonists, both illustrious and obscure, who hoped and yet doubted that the Bolshevik method, that even the Marxist method, would lead to the revolutionary goal. They questioned the Marxian props, the Bolshevik scaffolding — too hostile, they feared, to the sense of the blueprints to achieve the plan. Today all undeluded communists admit that at least the latter fear was justified. But they are scattered and disowned; so that their party may accomplish a prodigious lie organized for them by Stalin and his propagandists — the identity of communism and Stalinism.

Hypocrisy is no longer a capitalist specialty. The flag-waving politician, the rotarian of the bourgeoisie, is, in fact, a pale negativist beside the so-called radical of today. The swindlers to the left, not fewer than those to the right, shout louder; the following is theirs. The pretense has become accepted truth; the enemy is exultant; "the dangerous Red" is at length really dangerous, but to his followers not to his opponents.

Sometimes they stop shouting to say in an aside to those who refuse to be fooled: "Keep still, the end justifies the means." But what they won't yet admit is that the means are leading in the opposite direction, that somewhere en route the class-strugglers followed Stalin on the wrong short-cut — toward fascism, away from communism. That is what André Gide was one of the last of their friends to tell them, intimately, reluctantly, in his *Return from the U.S.S.R.* The plan meant as much to him as to them; he had refused to lose faith in the Soviet model until on a first visit the evidence of his senses forced him to it.

But apparently within the party the appearance of a Luther, who has in him not only protestant but pagan integrity with which to convince, is as yet premature; the lie has not run its course. Far from retracing their footsteps, his fellow-communists, who always had welcomed as accurate his testimony against capitalist society, used his report to discredit him — not the Soviet Union. In answer to their blast he published last May *Retouches à mon*

*Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* It signifies his strength and their weakness that the orthodox liberals and communists have ignored it (at least here in the United States). Stalinist sophistry feels powerless to refute this barrage of figures and data leading to a relentless verdict: There is no vestige of communism left in the U.S.S.R.

They had accused him of basing "enormous conclusions... on episodic evidence." He had made it a rule, he replies, to use nothing he himself had not seen or heard, and of that only what was typical; statistics, never too reliable, could be found elsewhere. But since they asked for it, he could give them "impersonal" proof in abundance. The documentation brought to him, since writing the *Return*, by Citrine, Trotsky, Mercier, Yvon, Victor Serge, Legay, Rudolph and many others had confirmed his suspicions and changed them to convictions: "From month to month the U.S.S.R. is getting further and further away from what we hoped it was, or would be."

The charge that he had written out of pique, that he had been slighted by these modern Russians is laughable, he tells them. No class, he points out, is so favored as that of the writer favorable to the régime. They heaped him with adulation and honors. The charge arose when they found they could not buy him. Their reception moreover had been ardent and spontaneous; he remembered it with lively gratitude. But it was not for that he had come. He had come, not to be admired, but to admire — a new world where *all* were "privileged" or promised to be; and "they had offered him the prerogatives he abominated in the old."

It was natural to want to show him the best of everything, and natural too for imperfections still to exist; it was moreover in the Russian nature to be lavish—one of their charms; and in his own protestant nature to be wary of luxury. Nonetheless in the light of their reception he had first suspected the reappearance of the old capitalist cancer — that same wide difference between the best and the worst, that same degree of inequality which the Revolution had for a time suppressed.

When he and his companions left their official guides and travelled alone, their uneasiness increased. Yet while there they were never certain of the causes behind what they saw of reaction. *Retouches* defines them; they converge toward one block, Stalin and his bureaucracy.

"One of the merited reproaches of my *Return*," Gide says in the opening pages, "is that of seeming to accord too great importance to intellectual questions... Yes, I had that naivete, I still believed that in the U.S.S.R. one could talk seriously of culture... All the same I protest that they have only consented to see in what I said the resentment of a litterateur. When I spoke of liberty of spirit, I had in mind many other things."

He had in mind the entire fabric of society: the realm of science, the cinema, the courts of justice, food, housing, clothes, education; and even that most boasted field — industrial production. Each of them, his evidence proves, has been compromised by the suppression of liberty, of untrammeled judgement. He repeats what is now common knowledge, that the scientist must denounce his theory as "unorthodox", or as "susceptible of being utilized by fascism"; that Eisenstein for example must repent of "past errors" and confess that the film he had worked on for 2 years at a cost of 2 million rubles, does not conform to the "doctrine". "As for justice", Gide exclaims, "does anyone think that these last trials... are going to make me regret the phrase that so outraged you: 'Nowhere, not even in Hitler's Germany, is the spirit less free, more terrorized etc.'?" Here in *Retouches* his reassertion is even more bitter and more specific:

"Those who disappear are the most valiant, those who differ from the mass, which owes its unity to a mediocrity constantly descending to lower levels. Stalin tolerates nothing but approval; the rest are adversaries. It happens sometimes that he adopts some proposed reform as his own, but... so that it shall appear the more his own, first he suppresses the man who proposed it."

And as for the authenticity of the trials and the confessions, *Retouches* offers the most technical adverse testimony I have seen printed: a letter from Kleber Legay, secretary of the National Federation of French Miners, who himself had been a worker in the mines for thirty years (to be found in the last section of the book, *Letters and Testimonies*).

With the same patience of Gallic logic Gide's *Retouches* questions Soviet production. The figures are impressive as to quantity, but what of the quality. *Pravda* and *Izvestia* of 1936 give disconcerting statistics: A large proportion of metals, automobile accessories, finished automobiles, phonograph discs, school copy books, were thrown away as unusable; chairs broke when sat on; surgery instruments bent and broke in the course of operations; model houses were in danger of falling apart, so hastily had they been constructed, and of such mediocre material. These figures had been cited as proof of sabotage, to justify further executions. But Gide deposes that "at the present stage of Soviet culture it is permissible to see in this waste an excessive and artificial intensification of production. Auto-criticism, so deficient in questions of theory and principles, is allowed full play only when it comes to embarking on new programs." But of these the

drugstores, the hospitals, the creches, of which there is crying need, do not come first; they give precedence to the public monument — for example "the palace of the Soviets (the defunct Soviets), 415 metres high, surmounted by a steel statue of Lenin 890 metres high... The Russian people, asked which they would rather have, well-being or palaces, are obliged to answer: The palace first!

Admitting this, the faithful cling to acquired results: no more unemployment, no more prostitution, woman the equal of man; human dignity reconquered, education for everyone. Yes, Gide replies, perhaps once acquired, and on the surface they may still seem to be, but the worm is always at the core of the fruit; and the worm in this case is a bureaucracy which has turned each of them into fiction. The best jobs go to party members, and even they have no choice as to the kind of work or its location. To complain is to risk being expelled from the party, and perhaps unemployed. Vast numbers of unemployed face misery, even starvation. Espionage is rewarded as a high State virtue; members of the same family, even the children, are encouraged to spy on each other; the aim is to get rid of critics; the aim is subordination, regimentation.

Lenin's rule which was to prevent bureaucracy — no salary shall exceed that of the average workman — goes unobserved. Salaries today range from 70 rubles to 10,000 rubles a month, even in a few cases to 30,000; the most usual salary is 150 rubles. The cost of living has so increased that those in the lower brackets go cold and hungry; young people dare not marry for fear of the children they could not support. With the law against abortion, prostitution in every sense is on its way back into this new world.

As for education, nothing is more moving, he repeats, "than the zeal of the young people avid for culture... and one is asked to admire on every hand the means placed at their disposal." But today the U.S.S.R. is far from the goal of 1923: the liquidation of illiteracy by 1927. Teachers, underpaid, and sometimes not paid at all, are too few and incompetent. It is the same with textbooks, insufficient in number and full of mistakes; for example,  $8 \times 3$  equals 18, Scotland is located on the Caspian Sea. Large numbers of children are inept scholars; as many more are truants from school.

Yet, and yet, his critics insist, and they quote from his *Return*: "The exploitation of the many for the profit of the few no longer exists; that is enormous...." Yes... but it ceases to be exact. Exploitation has reappeared with this added misery — they no longer know by whom they are exploited, or if they do, don't dare to say. He quotes Céline in *Mea Culpa* as nearer the truth than he was:

"Here (in France) at least we can still have some fun. We don't have to pretend, we are still the oppressed. We can still blame all the evils of destiny on the blood drinkers; and then behave like street girls. Not seen, not recognized! But when the right to destroy no longer exists? When you can't even complain? Life becomes intolerable." There is no getting away from it. The means of

production is not any more in the hands of the people; at best it is held in trust for them; but the trustees pocket the dividends. The old régime was destroyed, but new classes have arisen with just as rigid barriers as before, and fixed as before by widely varying incomes. The one difference is that of personnel. The functionaries, the favorable writers and artists make the aristocracy; the party-members in good standing, the upper middle classes; those outside who yet are self-supporting, the lower middle classes; all the rest, the despised poor.

"And," Gide insists, "this new bourgeoisie... has all the faults of ours. It no sooner came out of misery than it despised the miserable... (its members) may be inscribed in the party but they have nothing of communism in their hearts."

But then, his critics remind him of Stalin's new constitution. The power of the syndicates is gone, the power of the Soviets, to be sure, but the people can still get what they want through the "secret vote." Gide destroys this myth as another of Stalin's frauds. The elections are fixed; "bad candidates are discouraged" before election day. And who are they? Exactly the revolutionists of yesterday, the enemies of today's party, the counter-revolutionaries, who must be exiled and shot, until only the conformists remain.

Yet, one thing there is, Gide admits it: the Russian people "look happy". He recalls it with a kind of nostalgia. "Nowhere else do the crowds in the street, in the factories, in the parks and clubs (at least the young) offer so radiant an exterior... How reconcile that with the misery in which we now know the majority is plunged?" His answer is twofold. In more remote districts, he has been told, distress smites the eye; and in the travelled centers, he is convinced, "misery has to go into hiding... It is suspect, it is extremely dangerous, to look sad in the U.S.S.R.... The people you see are those whose well-being has been acquired at the expense of this misery. Russia is not a place for complaints; Siberia is."

"Don't mistake me," Gide pleads toward the close, "I transcribe these atrocious figures with regret... But... it is the magnitude of your bluff that makes so profound the fall of my confidence... What I especially reproach in the U.S.S.R. is their arrogance in having presented the lot of the workers as enviable. What I reproach our communists for... is in having lied to the workers, unconsciously or knowingly — in that case for political reasons..."

"I warned my new communist friends at the start... I shall never be a tranquilizing recruit, or a docile one..."

"There is no party that can retain me — which at the same time prevents me from preferring, even to the Party itself, the truth. When the lie intervenes, it is my role to denounce it. It is to the truth that I attach myself; if the Party quits it, by the same stroke I quit the Party."

"The U.S.S.R.... has betrayed all our hopes. If we don't want them to fall us we must take them elsewhere."

This a book to be translated into every language the world over spoken by workers prepared to claim the fruits of their labor. Not toward their despair; but so that they may know as irrefutable fact, and despite pretentious leaders, that the Soviet reign of terror has nothing in common with their liberation! It has only a warning to give them,

(from Russia, from Spain, and even from the party platforms of New York): no exploitation is so monstrous, so insidious, as that of the benefactor turned or turning traitor.

The book proceeds from multiple sources, Gide's own and those of others, but perhaps no one else has so brilliantly relighted and reclarified the issues. It takes at least the resource of an André Gide to be a giant-killer. That failing, only the next war will turn the trick.

The fire of his arraignment leaves clean ashes for the rebirth of the phoenix. He proposes nothing, but each page is implicit with the need of new or revised revolutionary direction. As he lights the evidence, one has to conclude that the word of Marx himself, Lenin's too, and above all Trotsky's, need revision. The very term, "dictatorship of the proletariat"—hasn't it led to an arrogance and a snobbishness incompatible with freedom? And from that all too readily to this single despot, flanked by his courtiers, freshly supplied from day to day? Lenin's doctrine of "relative truth", — hasn't it led to the compulsory optimism of the Bolsheviks? And thence to the stifling of their robust values toward the fixed lies of Stalin?

And Trotsky? Perhaps there is excuse for his brand of expedient realism; it might take a wolf to keep the wolf from the door of either a Marx or a Lenin — bread is given out of fear or taken by force. Nonetheless didn't Trotsky's prohibition of grief, his militant infliction of health, create a State puritanism, a self-righteous absolutism, that has streamlined the way of the usurper. Gide is no dogmatist, but this document, the by-product of a long devotion to "subversive" nature, proves that veritable realism is an aesthetic principle as vital to bread as it is to art. The one indispensable luxury to live and die for, that others may live! The one requisite of authentic revolution!

---

## A Word from the Editors

---

We ask our subscribers to again accept our apologies for the delay in the issuance of VANGUARD. Let us state however that there is one extenuating circumstance of considerable import — that of finances. Now, instead of an urgent heart-rending appeal for funds, we are going to let our journal speak for itself. We have assumed an even greater debt by enlarging this number of VANGUARD to twenty pages, presenting more material and added features. Readers, friends, comrades, if you like this issue of our magazine and want to see it appear regularly then you know what to do... We await your answer.

As several month's material had to be crowded into one magazine we were forced to omit a number of important articles scheduled for this issue. Among such articles which we plan to print next month are: the conclusion of "Spain Faces the Future", the review of Rocker's "Nationalism and Culture", and an answer to Yaroslovsky's "Anarchism in Russia".

We should like to note that the editors of VANGUARD do not necessarily share the views of articles or letters signed by their authors.

# The Truth about Kronstadt

By VICTOR SERGE

IN answer to a German journalist who had questioned him on these subjects, Leon D. Trotsky, published in the Russian edition of the Bulletin of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition (July, 1937) a rather brief letter in which he discusses the insurrection of Kronstadt, and Makhno. Ida Mett has answered him in this journal by posing several new questions of considerable pertinence. Nobody but Trotsky is capable of writing the great history of the most difficult and memorable years of the revolution, a history which is necessary for anyone who wants to draw up the balance sheet of this great experience. There are many of us awaiting this, and we hope it will be conceived in a critical, even self-critical, spirit... and that is why the few lines published by the Opposition Bulletin seem to me today to be insufficient and unjust in several respects. "There remained" (in Kronstadt), writes Trotsky, "the grey mass, with great pretensions, not disposed to make sacrifices for the Revolution. The country was starving, the sailors of Kronstadt demanded privileges... the movement therefore had a counter-revolutionary character. And since the sailors had seized the fortress, we were compelled to crush them by force..." I was in Petrograd at that time, working together with Zinoviev. I saw these events first-hand. I read very attentively, afterwards, all the issues of *Izvestia* (official organ. - Ed.) of the rebellious Kronstadt Soviet. It is true that the country was starving; it would even be true to say that the country was at the end of its resources, that it was literally dying of hunger everywhere. It is inexact to say that the Kronstadt sailors had demanded privileges; they demanded for the cities in general the suppression of the special police (*zagraditelnye otriady*) which surrounded the city to prevent the population from supplying itself with food from the country by its own means: later, when they saw themselves engaged in a mortal combat, they formulated a series of political demands which were extremely dangerous for that moment, but which were prompted by a sincere revolutionary spirit. Those were the demands of freely elected Soviets.

It would have been easy to avoid the events by listening to the grievances of Kronstadt and discussing them, even in giving some satisfaction to the sailors (we'll prove that later on). The Central Committee committed the enormous mistake of sending Kalinin, who had already behaved as a harsh and incapable bureaucrat. He was hooted down.

It would have been easy, even after the fighting had begun, to have avoided the worst: it would have been sufficient to accept the mediation offers of the Anarchists (Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, notably) who had strong ties with the rebels. Because of reasons of prestige, and because of an overweening authoritarian spirit, the Central

Committee refused. The main responsibility for all this must be laid to Zinoviev, President of the Petrograd Soviet, who had just deceived the whole Party, all the proletariat of that section, and all the population by saying that the "The White Guard General Kozlovski had treasonably taken possession of the Kronstadt". It would have been easy, more humane, more politic and more in keeping with the spirit of socialism after the military victory over Kronstadt by Voroshilov, Dlbenko, Tukachevsky, not to have had recourse to such massacre... The massacre which followed was abominable.

The economic demands of Kronstadt were so legitimate, so far from being counter-revolutionary, so easy to satisfy that, at the very time when they were shooting down the last mutineers, Lenin satisfied these demands in adopting the New Economic Policy. The N.E.P. was imposed by the events at Kronstadt, Tambov and other places. For we must say clearly: Lenin's foresight, and that of the Central Committee did not wish to see what the whole country felt: that war communism had reached an impasse where one could no longer live.

(The above article by Victor Serge is a segment of a larger article called "Words and Deeds" which appeared in the Sept. 25th issue of the "La Revolution Proletarienne"

(We have reprinted the section dealing with Kronstadt because we believe that it is powerful ammunition for proving our thesis... that Stalinism and Trotskyism are akin, at least in their disregard for the truth. - Edit.)

## The Trotsky School of Falsification

By SENEX

DURING the entire period of his struggle against Stalin, Leon Trotsky studiously avoided touching upon one of the cardinal problems in the analysis of the present Soviet regime. To what extent is Stalinism rooted in the recent past of the Communist Party, that is, in the general course pursued by the Bolshevik leaders of that period — Lenin and Trotsky — during the formative years of the new social system born out of the October upheaval? This question, which arises at once before anyone desiring to obtain an historical perspective of the ominous drifts and tendencies of the Stalin regime was until recently ignored by Trotsky. Whatever historic reasons were adduced by him in order to explain the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, they failed to touch upon a period which had the most powerful effect in shaping the course of the Russian Thermidor.

That there is a close relationship between the policies of the first, so called heroic, phase of Bolshevism and its Thermidorian finale should be clear

to anyone who has given some thought to this matter. Stalinism grew imperceptibly out of the institutions and social patterns set up in the first years of the Revolution. Unlike the French Thermidor, it did not come via political explosions of a pronounced counter-revolutionary nature. There were no sharp breaks and gaps in the continuous process of the Thermidorian degeneration of the Russian Revolution. This striking fact of continuity between the Leninist and Stalinist phases of the Revolution cannot be explained away by references to Russian backwardness or the perfidious role of the emerging bureaucracy in adopting for its own ends the social and political forms evolved in the first period of the October Revolution. The question remains as to why those forms lent themselves so readily to this bureaucratic transformation.

Were there any implicit contradictions between those forms and the Thermidorian aims of bureaucracy, the latter would have been forced to resort to a political upheaval, it would have cast about for a more fitting instrument for its needs than the dictatorship shaped during the so-called heroic period of Bolshevism.

At last Trotsky has been forced to break his silence in regard to those matters. Persistence won out and as a result we have several remarkable documents fully revealing the limitations of his views. He still will not revalue the course of the October Revolution in the light of the later tragic developments. On August 21st, in the *Socialist Appeal*, Trotsky set out to answer a few questions put to him by Wendelin Thomas.

Trotsky at last has deigned to cope with moral problems and humanitarian values! Trotsky today has need for the liberal conscience of the world, and so, bolstering up his spirits with a few sneers at the "moralizers", he proceeds nevertheless to unbend to the extent of admitting that there must be some compatibility between the "means" and the "end". He writes, "If the aim (of Socialism) is the liberation of mankind, then falsehood and treachery can in no way be appropriate means..." "In the period," he writes further, "when the revolution fought for the liberation of the oppressed masses it called everything by its right name and was in no need of forgeries."

That the Bolshevik party, headed by Lenin and Trotsky, refrained from using falsehood and betrayal in dealing with other revolutionary movements, is itself a prize falsehood among falsehoods. It takes a Stalinist to believe this sort of "history".

So apparently Trotsky has not been won over to the side of revolutionary ethics.

He proceeds further to give the lie to his statement by cramming his pamphlet full with the grossest slanders against Makhno and the Kronstadt sailors.

That deliberate falsification is the basis for his accusations against Kronstadt, we believe you may adduce from the reactions of Victor Serge, one of the most sincere men in the Left Communist movement, an ardent partisan of Trotsky and his cause,

and an eye-witness to the events.

But what about Makhno? The Makhno movement is not as well documented as the Kronstadt rebellion. It did not unfold in the full glare of publicity that followed the Kronstadt events. But 1937 is not 1919. Enough has been revealed about this movement to make even Trotsky think twice before falling back upon the Chekist fabrications of the year 1919.

"The Makhno movement was a kulak movement" — Trotsky repeats his old accusations against the libertarian movement of the Ukrainian peasants. How near in spirit is this accusation to the one now spread by the Spanish Communists against the Anarchist land-workers of Spain and their collectives! But by now we have a number of data which shows up these assertions for what they are worth: rancorous outbursts of old partisanship having as little to do with a genuine revolutionary attitude as the similar ranting of the Stalinists against their oppositionists.

The Makhno movement was primarily a movement of the poorer peasants. This can be seen from the fact that the Makhnovites were the first to start building collectives in that part of Southwest Russia. The rich peasants were hostile to these collectives while the middle peasantry maintained an attitude of benevolent neutrality. A perusal of the brief biographical sketches of the most active figures of this movement (given in P. Archinov's "History of the Makhno Movement" — French and Spanish translations) will show that the preponderant majority of them, beginning with Makhno himself, came from the poorer, semi-proletarianized layers of the peasantry. And it is because the social aspirations of the poorer sections of the village were given full expression by the Makhno movement, that the Bolshevik authorities, with Trotsky as the keynoter, opened their campaign against this movement. The monstrously absurd agrarian policy carried out at that time by the Communist Party (the later Bolshevik writers on the Makhno movement like Kabanin had to admit that the strength of the Makhno army lay in the sympathies of the peasant population driven to exasperation by the absurd policy of a State monopoly of grain and the attempt to militarize the peasant economy) was bitterly resented by the bulk of the peasantry (and city workers as well) and it is the manifestations of this resentment that were dubbed as kulak intrigues.

That the legitimate resistance to this monstrous regime of a militarized economy, now considered by all leading Bolsheviks to have been based upon illusions and dangerous fallacies (Trotsky himself admits as much in "The Revolution Betrayed"), should be branded, even now, almost two decades after the rejection of this system, as counter-revolutionary manifestations is in itself the best proof of how little Trotsky has learned from his tragic experience, and how dangerously close he is in his approaches, attitudes and totalitarian mentality to his most bitter political adversary.

# Who Slew Proletcult?

By DAVID LAWRENCE

THE belletristic history of America abounds with examples of creative spirits whose concern with the trials of the underprivileged dominated their thought processes and was reflected in their art. However, when we use the term proletarian culture or "proletcult" (as its intimates prefer to telescope it) we do not have in mind this timeless, everlasting *penchant* of the customarily impoverished artist for aligning himself with his "have not" fellows against the "haves". When we today speak of proletarian culture we mean simply the much touted school of "creativity", that seven year wonder, which came into being in America simultaneously with the financial earthquake of 1929 and sang its last feeble swan song toward the end of 1936.

It possessed certain definite characteristics that set it apart from other artistic groupings: it drew its inspiration and sustenance solely from one political sect; it believed and loudly affirmed that "Art Is A Weapon" (in the class struggle) and managed despite a paucity of real talent, to create a furore unique in our times. Due to its practical domination of our aesthetic scene for the past seven years, informed people, who concern themselves with this sort of thing, know what the term connotes regardless of the fact that it is a misnomer... for the artistic end products were themselves not produced by workers nor utilized by them. However, *proletcult* it was dubbed, and so we knew it.

Today it has passed leaving remarkably few traces for so lusty a school; and stranger still, when we consider its one-time popularity, there are no mourners to weep at the bier!

Where are the devotees of yesterday?

Most of its Soviet friends, who supplied the political directives for its every manoeuvre, are through with weeping forever... Gorki (individualist to the end) dead of natural causes; Radek, Bukharin, Illes, Auerbach, Jascinski, Kirshon, Afino-guenov, et al, not talking for export or for national consumption. Its American godfathers are occupied with other tasks, of which we shall speak later.

## The Middle Class Goes "Red"

But let us go back to 1929... suddenly American capital keeled over on its ear and there was chaos. The working class, possessed on occasion of a gregarious pack instinct which is its salvation, ganged up to fight the crisis; unionism took a new lease on life; militant direct action flared up in many sections of the country. Adversity unites the working class, brings about a sort of solidaric adhesion. Not so with the middle class (from which any American culture in this period must stem). The loss of vocational sinecures and the bogey of insecurity threw the white collar boys and girls into a panic. The petty bourgeoisie all over the world have one thing in common, in contradistinc-

tion to the working class: when trouble strikes, having no tradition of self reliance or group action, their first instinct is to attach themselves to a "Leader", a miracle worker who guarantees to lead them out of their intellectual dilemmas into some political promised land. This tendency, we know, was responsible, in some degree, for the success of Fascism in Germany and Italy. Fascism with its Leader, its Duce, its Fuehrer, its Man on a White Horse, proved a haven for an hysterical middle class.

So, all in a dither, the American group that lives by its wits rather than by its brawn set out in search of an Iron Man.

In the U.S.A. there was no organized Fascist clique of any stature capable of making a bid for the middle class. Then too, many American middle class intellectuals, small business men, writers, artists, etc., are Jews and, therefore wary of the Hackenkreutz.

But they needed leaders and they found them... in the Communist Party or in its "innocent" or "bridge" affiliates.

Communism has other subcutaneous affinities with fascism in addition to a common love for devouring their young... the most obvious point of agreement lies in a fanatical devotion to the "Cult of the Leader". For Communists this worship starts with Comrade Stalin, the Iron Man of the Georgian Steppes, who is, among many other nice things, "The Beloved Leader of the World Proletariat". In Russia, as we know, this canonization can reach heights that are almost unbelievable.

Under Stalin are a host of lesser Russian "Beloved Leaders" who change too rapidly to be worth noting. Due, no doubt, to the terrific speed of Socialist production, a "Beloved Leader" of today is frequently the corpse of tomorrow.

Then, the "Beloved Leaders" are divided nationally; Earl Browder becomes the "Beloved Leader" of the American working class, Tim Buck the "Beloved Leader" of the Canadian working class, etc. There is also a functional division: James Ford becomes the "Beloved Leader" of the Negro people, Ben Gold the "Beloved Leader" of the Fur Workers, Moissaye Olgin a sort of "Beloved Leader" at large for oppressed minority races, etc. There is division upon division, each with its Leader. He is a sorry specimen of a C.P. functionary indeed, who is not the "Beloved Leader" of at least a factory group or a neighborhood unit.

If the middle class needed leaders, the C.P. could supply them in any quantity.

Mass conversions among the panicky middle class folk became the order of the day. Many went the whole hog and actually joined the Party, but the great majority clung to what is known as the "Fringe of the Movement".

### **"Third Period" Culture**

The Communist Party that took them to its bosom was a much, much, different party from the one we know today. At that time it was going through a stage that has come to be known historically as the "Third Period" in American Communism. Space does not allow for a complete analysis of this phase; it suffices for us to understand that the Party, in line with the needs of Moscow at that time, was so "red" that it would have completely terrified its present following of dentists, school teachers and home relief investigators. This was the period of frenzied leftism in all fields; Capitalism was all ready to give up the ghost (Jay Lovestone who suggested that American Capitalism still had a couple of good kicks left in it, was immediately labeled an enemy of the working class); all parties and groups outside of the Third International were "Social-Fascist", etc.

With the droves of newly recruited middle class intellectuals the C.P. began to fashion a cultural movement which reflected its "Third Period" Leftism. With the middle class as tools they set out to build a "working class" art. This seemingly contradictory phenomenon can be explained only by the use of "dialectics" which exists, conveniently, just for this purpose.

There had always been Communist creative spirits and literateurs like Mike Gold and Joseph Freeman, intrepid souls who practically monopolized their fields and advised competitors to go into the factories if they wanted to write of the working class. But the new influx of bourgeois dilettantes started a cultural movement that even the most optimistic C.P. rotarian had never dreamed was possible. The American middle class is the culture in America and when they came to Communism they brought their intellectual baggage: the fads and foibles, the music, painting, literature, dance, all the component parts that go to make up what we call a culture. Mentally, Greenwich Village moved up to 14th Street, where they began to write, sing, dance, paint, whittle, and play the bass viol for the delectation of the working class and the glory of the Communist International.

### **The Movement Grows**

And how they thrived... for a time.

Just a few of the better known organizations that sprang into being at this time come readily to mind: The John Reed Clubs, The Pen and Hammer, The Workers Film and Photo League, The Anvil, The Partisan Review, Left, Left Front, The Magazine, Left Review, New Theatre, Theatre Union, Workers Dance League, Theatre Collective, Theatre of Action, Pierre Degeyter Club, The Music Vanguard, Red Dancers, New Dance Group, Theatre Union Dance Group, The Partisan, Blast, Dynamo, Workers Laboratory Theatre, Leftward, American Revolutionary Dancers, New Dance, Harlem Prolets, New Duncan Dance Group, Vanguard Dance Group, Rebel Dancers, League of Workers Theatres, and at least another two or three dozen that space does not allow us to list. Add to this

list a ton or so of proletarian novels, a square mile of canvas used to depict lynchings in oil and water-color and you will have some idea of the proportions the movement assumed.

Of the above list of magazines and organizations scarcely a half dozen are still in operation. In the magazine division, which once reached such proportions that it was necessary for the C.P. to establish a Central Distribution Agency with a fleet of trucks to take care of New York City distribution alone, *not one remains!* The C.P. today does not boast of a single literary magazine in America (unless one considers the *New Masses* a literary magazine, which would be stretching the point a bit too far even for a Stalinist). Even the *New Masses* in page-long heart-rending appeals for funds informs us that they are in the worst financial straits they have ever been and are threatened with extinction unless the subscribers dig down. (This is unmitigated bologna, of course, as the source from which most of their money flows is a little bloody but ample enough for the simple needs of Joseph Freeman and his loyal band.)

The complete breakdown of the Communist literary movement is, perhaps, the most startling collapse of all, because of the great vogue that it enjoyed; but the same blight afflicted all divisions.

When the New Dance League was formed dancers flocked to it in droves. (It was called at first the Workers Dance League.) There was a good reason for this. After all it is hard to be a dancer without an audience and in America the dance audience is so limited that it is exhausted by the two or three stars in the profession leaving nothing for the young dancer or the dancer without means of bringing herself to their attention. The average dancer in America will jump at the chance to appear before any reasonably intelligent audience; and the C.P. guaranteed, if not a discriminating audience, at least a big one. The political Commissars in charge of the League let it be known that henceforth dancers would dance social themes. This was OK with the majority of the dancers who simply dragged out their old dances once called "Ode to a Skylark" or "Spring" and re-titled "Death of a Komsomol" or "Tukachevsky's March". At the height of its success the New Dance League was the proud parent of some 25 sister groups, with a school, a booking bureau, a section of New Theatre for its very own, (it even was the proud sponsor of a magazine New Dance until the political genius in charge decided that it was cutting down the sales of New Theatre). The booking office was jammed with requests for performances from workers' clubs. Joint recitals were held almost weekly to packed halls. With the exercise of a little energy they managed to fill houses such as the Radio City Music Hall, etc. Great dancers like Martha Graham danced for them at benefits... this was at the peak of their popularity. Today, the New Dance League exists only on paper or for the benefit of a few solo dancers. Only one group of any consequence remains, the Theatre Union Dance Group which, directed by a fine artist, Anna

Sokolow, exists despite the New Dance League.

The Theatre movement fared as ill. Some years ago the C.P. inspired theatre was spoken of as the only vital force in the American Theatre, and not without cause. The Theatre Union, the most pretentious group in the movement, hailed as the only "united front" cultural group that worked in practice, was the proud owner of the Civic Repertory Theatre which they packed to the rafters season on end with hits like the "Sailors of Cattaro", "Stevedore", "The Black Pit". Other groups were equally successful: the Workers Laboratory Theatre, the Theatre Collective; the Theatre of Action, etc. worked hard in the depression years and were productive. They too had their headquarters (some with communal living quarters), schools; they produced corking agitprop plays like Waiting for Lefty, Newsboy, etc. They supported and were supported by New Theatre. The Theatre Movement was truly a vital current in the drama... today it is hardly a trickle. The smaller groups have given up the struggle entirely; the Theatre Union shut up shop this season after two desultory attempts at production which were dismal failures. New Theatre has died, alas.

So much for the past achievements and the present state of proletcult. Now let's get to the why and wherefore.

### **Who Slew Proletcult?**

At the risk of oversimplification I believe that the reasons for the decline of proletcult can be listed under five general headings: 1. political meddling; 2. the advent of the W.P.A.; 3. the change in the policy of the Communist International and the Moscow Trials; 4. simple sabotage when it no longer jibed with political policies of the Comintern; 5. the mistaken premise that they were creating a culture for the good old American working class, which is satisfied enough with its present Hollywood divertissements and its Racing Forms.

Perhaps we should have listed the coming of the W.P.A. first on our list of contributing factors to the downfall of the lady proletcult. It was certainly a most potent force in her destruction.

When the intellectuals came to worship at the shrine of *Marxismus-Leninismus* it assured them a place in heaven, history was on their side, and some time in the future they would all be commissars; but it left them with the same miserable financial present. One thing the C.P. did not promise its converts was a present-day easy street. Just because Comrade Oigin lives in a poky little duplex hovel with uniformed lackeys outside the door to steer the working class to the servants entrance; or because the ex-editor of Soviet Russia Today was driven to work (sic) by his Negro chauffeur, or because Bob Minor, Joseph Brodsky, and a few others have country homes, is no reason to believe that every scribbler can achieve the same sort of prosperity. It is the unusual man who can "make a really good thing" out of the C.P. The run of the mill must be satisfied with the bare necessities and an occasional trip to the Workers Fatherland as a bonus.

So when Roosevelt in his goodness handed down the Cultural Projects the "commies" were Johnny on the spot. Being an organized force, having control of the "cultural" unions like the Artists Union, the Dancers Union, and the Writers Union they were able to put in their thumbs and pull out some plums. The head job on the writers project went to an editor of the Masses, the big jobs in the Theatre project went to lads from the Theatre Collective, and the Theatre of Action. When the supervisory positions ran out the rest of the boys and girls had to be satisfied with the 23.86 jobs. They then proceeded to set up the City Projects Councils to see that they kept their jobs.

Once assured of at least 23.86 a week large numbers of the commie creative souls stopped creating. A sufficient number, at least, to deal a death blow to the already wobbly proletcult. Proletarian saviors shed the grim mantle of the class struggle and spent long hours drinking beer on Sixth Ave.; they bought Adams hats and Adler shoes; they cluttered up neighborhood movie houses and developed strong backhands on ping-pong tables in the 14th Street poolrooms; they ate 50 cent dinners and waxed fat... while the muse withered.

However, one suspects that Mistress W.P.A. could not have seduced them so easily if they had not been previously disillusioned in Madame Proletcult; for building a proletarian culture in America, the ambitious artists soon found, was not a path of roses.

First, they discovered that if they were to do anything of quality they were forced to do so under the direction of Party hacks who were busily employed strait-jacketing production to fit the party "line". Communism like Fascism, being authoritarian, is anti-cultural. Even if we were not aware of the seasonal library purges indulged in by Moscow akin to the book burnings of their German brothers; even if we had not read the laughable concoctions that they attempt to palm off as "history"; even if we had not watched the books disappear from the shelves of the Communist bookshop in New York as soon as their unfortunate authors (Bukharin, Radek, Riazanov, Tukachevsky, and dozens of others) fell into disfavor with the Leader of the World Proletariat, we would still maintain that art can flourish only when the artist is allowed to deal with things as they appear to him. No great art was ever produced by one who looked at the world through political glasses, sacrificing truth for political tactical needs.

What laughable exhibitions are the Communist congresses held every so often to protest against the cultural savagery of the Fascists. So the Fascists burned the books of Erich Muhsam? When you discuss this at one of your World Congresses, dear Communist friends, may we interject a word in behalf of Zensel Muhsam, his wife, whom you hold prisoner in your Soviet model prisons?

The Fascist crimes against art differ from the Communist depredations only in their lack of cleverness. It is simply a question of whether one prefers bonfires in the streets or a furnace in the cellar of the Kremlin.

Writers of consequence like James Farrell, Edward Dahlberg, Edmund Wilson, John Dos Passos, etc. were driven first to distraction and then out of the movement by the critical standards of the recognized Party authorities on Marxian criticism: Joseph Freeman, Granville Hicks, Edwin Seaver, Isidore Schneider and a host of lesser luminaries who make up the Masses-Daily Worker crowd. For a detailed study of their policies refer to James Farrell's *A Note on Literary Criticism*. It suffices for our purpose to understand that these worthy gentlemen confused literary criticism with political apologetics.

Aesthetic criteria were thrown into the discard and replaced by the exigencies of Party politics; in spite of dubious affirmations on the necessity of *good art* and *good politites*, the "critical" standards remained the same so that a good writer became, by definition, one who is a friend of the Soviet Union, and a bad writer, one who preferred writing novels to signing petitions asking for the death penalty for old Bolsheviks. Gradually a schism developed within the left wing literary movement and writers started to desert the Masses-Daily Worker clique and look with some hope to the Partisan Review edited under Party auspices but with the editorial guidance of Philip Rahv, Alan Calmer, and William Phillips, young men who had a healthy hatred for the Old Guard literary fakers and were willing to treat literature as an art and a craft. The pique of the old standbys mounted in proportion to the amount of success enjoyed by the younger men on the Partisan Review. It was not long before Freemanites started a whispering campaign of calumny and slander, (at which Joseph Freeman acknowledges no master) that finally led to the withdrawal of Party patronage and the end of the Review. For a time the rage of the younger group mounted to such heights that Freeman was threatened with physical violence and was confined to his bed for a period with a "nervous breakdown".

When the W.P.A. came along, people who had been as shabbily treated as these young men, jumped at the opportunity of severing relations with the Freemans, Golds and Seavers.

The Partisan Review is to be revived shortly under the influence of Anti-C.P. forces.

The same ills afflicted the other cultural movements. Criticism in the Dance was entrusted to slightly dessicated young ladies like Edna Ocko and Nadia Chilkovsky who had hoped to be dancers but couldn't make the grade and as a consequence were glad, with the authority that the Party gave them, to vent their spleen upon their more successful sisters. Their weapon was New Theatre and through it they managed to alienate whole sections of the dance movement. Here, too, a counter movement grew up and *New Dance* appeared under the editorship of Simon Hall and Leonard Dal Negro, two young critics who refused to sacrifice artistic integrity on the altar of political expediency. The Party hacks squawked and *New Dance* was "liquidated". Another force that helped to break the Dance movement was the lightning quick tactical about face that followed the Seventh Congress of

the C.I. Before the advent if the Peoples Front disease the Dance movement had been concerned with and concentrated most of its efforts upon the formation of workers dance groups, amateur aggregations, who performed not too skillfully but with sincerity and feeling, revolutionary composititons intended to win converts to the "Cause". But when the political turn came, all efforts were turned to winning over the professional performer and the workers groups were to get along as best they could without the support of the League and despite the sneers of the official critics who had given them the only line they knew, but who now had changed their red stripes for the more respectable red-white-and-blue. The poor, confused workers Dance groups, couldn't take it, and slowly they sickened and died. And what a boon the W.P.A. was to the youngsters in these groups who might never had danced again were it not for the intervention of Comrade Roosevelt.

That things went pretty much the same in the Music division of proletcult is evidenced by the Shostakovich affair. The red musicologists were hard pressed to find something to praise in Soviet music with the exception of course, of Shostakovich. So he became the little tin Jesus of the Pierre Degeyter Club, until to their dismay, word came from Moscow that Comrade Shostakovich was in disfavor. The Soviet bigwigs, always notoriously reactionary in their artistic (sic) judgments: preferring the classical ballet to the dance, confectionary to architecture, portraiture to painting, etc., had decided that Shostakovich was not a musician because he didn't write tunes that workers could whistle. Of course, the American Comrades had to follow the lead of their Soviet gods and poor old Shostakovich became anathema. (As we go to press my musical informant advises me that Shostakovich has written several whistleable numbers and is coming back into favor.)

Political meddling, bureaucracy in theory and practice, a lack of critical values outside of political theses paved the way for the death of proletcult.

### **Death in Moscow — Sabotage**

Of course, the Moscow trials did their bit in disorganizing the movement. Even Comrade Stalin cannot expect to murder the entire Bolshevik Old Guard without it having some foreign repercussions amongst people who were brought up to believe that this same Bolshevik Old Guard were little less than infallible. Many intellectuals, after the first batch of slayings, simply took the negative "a plague o' both your houses" attitude, while others, like James Farrell, John Dos Passos, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Meyer Shapiro, John Sloan, etc. came out in defense of Trotsky! Losing sympathisers like these is a blow that the Stalinite intellectual movement cannot survive. They simply have no people any more of the caliber of Wilson, Shapiro or Farrell who are the type that give a cultural movement its substance and authority.

Stalinism in America feels that it is well rid of "proletcult". Its inherent militancy would be em-

barrassing in the present Popular Front period where its propaganda is no longer aimed at the working class but at "all sections of the American people". They are interested today in laying the ghost of the "Third Period" and proletcult is an integral part of the phantom. Their efforts today are concentrated on what might be termed a "popfrontcult". (This subject we hope to cover in another article in the *Vanguard*.)

### Words in Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to suggest that any movement, whatever its political philosophy, cannot hope to succeed in establishing a proletarian culture in America, unless as an initial step an inquiry is made into the cultural needs and *desires* of the American working class. To expect to graft on to the American worker a sophisticated culture foreign to his experience is the epitome of conceited ignorance. Our proletculters learned this soon enough: the poets broke their hearts because American workers preferred Edgar Guest (whom they can understand) to the subtleties of modern verse which is some miles over their heads; the novelists wrote novels and then found that the workers passed them to read mystery stories or yarns of illicit romance; the dancers were laughed at in workers clubs. Finally, of course, they fell back unconsciously to doing what they had done before

they were bitten with the Marxist bug: the poets wrote for other poets; the artists painted so that their brother artists might see their work; the novelists stopped banging their heads against a stone wall and became satisfied with their usual limited audiences (and the W.P.A. supported them).

When and if the American workers, driven from their monumental easygoing satisfaction with things as they were and fear of change, contrive to drive out their masters and regulate their own lives, perhaps they will also feel the need for developing and codifying their leisure time occupations. *Unless* (and here lies the root of the matter) revolutionary agitation is coupled consistently, at every step, with an enlightened educational propaganda, it is more than likely that the newly victorious proletariat will install a "proletcult" widely different from the one just discussed, but equally debasing, with Edgar Guest as the poet laureate, Gypsy Rose Lee and Shirley Temple as the Prima Ballarinas, Rudy Vallee as the first conductor of the land, etc.

Our task is to do what little we may to undermine the present artistic standards imposed on the American people and to sow the seeds of a real culture based not on Hollywood, gin and *Gone With The Wind*, but on human dignity, and freedom of intellect.

## A Note on Libertarian Communism

**T**HREE is a great deal of ferment in the revolutionary movement today which revolves around the problem of why the Marxist socialist movements of the last half-century have all failed to live up to any of their promises or hopes. Were they defeated by lack of numbers or failure to get into power? The answer is obvious: They did have their chance, — more than once. They easily yielded to their avowed enemies, the bourgeoisie, the fascists; or themselves turned traitor against their own followers. Then was it a matter of poor tactics? It must be admitted that as tacticians, as political maneuverers the Marxists are past masters. They have devoted the greatest part of their time and energy to this phase of their endeavors. While tactical errors have been made, this is a minor factor in their degeneration. The cause for these tragic failures must lie someplace else.

A comparison between some important aspects of Marxist socialism and Libertarian Communism may help to uncover the cause.

The common goal of all progressive persons is a society in which the basic needs of human beings will be the concern of the whole body social, a system whereby the livelihood, welfare and aspirations of all are not left to the hap-hazard workings of the automatic controls of our self-interest motivated society. Those certain liberties achieved even by such a private-property, capitalistic society are, however, not given any place of importance in the social-reconstruction schemes of our Marxist fel-

low-radicals; and thus they fall into the trap of thinking that liberty is an automatic derivative of capitalist economic life and is manifested in direct proportion as the system automatically satisfies the need for economic welfare. Liberty diminished as capitalism declined, they said, but under Socialism the State would provide for the economic needs of the workers and liberty would thus be assured.

So it transpired that *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*, — the aims of all progressive persons, the pillars of a progressive society — became gradually nothing but a slogan, a catchword which even the charlatans could employ and for which could be substituted other words that sounded just as beautiful but had a different, a sinister meaning.

What was left, then, of socialist and Marxist philosophy was mainly one feature, which, of course, is common to both Libertarians and Marxists — that of a socialistic mode of production. From the one-sided plan to change the economic structure of society, it is an easy step to the state socialism of the German Social-Democracy, to the state capitalism of Russian Bolshevism (differing from the former mainly in tactics) or to class collaboration to achieve reformed, regulated capitalism à la Blum or Roosevelt. Marxism thus went awry because it had only half a philosophy and left some of its important ends to be achieved by a miraculous, hokus-pokus deterministic process. Libertarian Communists feel that they have a vital contribution to make in this respect. We say that

our common aims are more likely to be reached by the application in concrete ways of an integrated philosophy of social change.

We must first understand more definitely what these common aims are. Any progressive society of the type we all envision must be formed on the human relationships commonly known as liberty, equality, and fraternity. These "goods" of our social philosophy must be subscribed to by all who do not consider themselves anti-humanitarian, anti-social or (more often nowadays) Fascist.\*

A *Libertarian Communist* society, (sometimes also known as Anarchist-Communist) something to which the Marxists, presumably, also aspire, is one which incorporates these cornerstones of civilization and integrates all three into a coordinated system. And it is in the unification of these into a harmonious whole, both in our conception of the new society and in our methods of achieving it, that we differ from competing schools of revolutionary thought.

Libertarian Communism strives to make real these "goods" by a system of social control whose significant bulwarks are:

I. *Federalism*. This implies a dispersion of political power among autonomous but cooperating political entities, geographical, industrial and social units, each sovereign in its own sphere of life. This dispersion of power, breaking up of sovereignty, helps to prevent the intrusion of dictatorship by one group over another whose desires it knows best itself; it minimizes the dangers of dictatorship; it is thus a real guarantee of liberty for the federated units.

II. *Functional Decentralization*. The social structure should consist of functional units, that is, units composed of people who function in a common activity, whose activities are directed to the same particular end. Thus, social and economic life will be divided into various industrial and professional groupings. Democracy is therefore maximised and made an active process, for, one shall function in the field one understands best, in which one has the greatest interest and expends one's major energies. In this way an individual can exercise his "vote" most intelligently and meaningfully.

\* LIBERTY is the freedom from natural and human restraints, limited only by the laws of nature and by the material needs (and complexities) of civilized life, which nevertheless must not leave the individual with unsatisfied basic needs or with the feeling that that the development of his personality has been frustrated.

EQUALITY means that individuals shall have the right to obtain their needed share of the products of social wealth without depriving others of their needed share; this requires an organization of opportunities that is consistent with social needs, so that each person may do what he desires, participate in any field of endeavor without the scales being weighted against him beforehand.

FRATERNITY is the practice of social solidarity and mutual aid, the development of which knits society into a more cohesive, responsible and integrated body. (This requires also mutual respect of individuals for one another as human beings.)

Society can be broadly classified into three main functional groupings (necessarily overlapping): productive, distributive and social. An individual whose prime interest and activity is in one of these groupings has his greatest say, his "vote" in that particular sphere of life. It is in these categories that men have the most interests in common and are naturally most united in and which lead to the least possible conflict among each other. But political, religious, racial and national divisions are categories wherein men are most divided and which tend to intensify conflict among men.

III. *Democracy*. Delegation of the power of the people to higher representatives is insufficient to insure the carrying out of the will of the people. There are, also, many "wills" of many groups of people and these "wills" tend to function best when each individual exercises a greater and greater control and management of the life of his functional unit and of general social life embodied in the federations of these units. Groupings of an ideological nature must, of course, also be free to propagate their views.

A Libertarian Communist world will thus be a workers society wherein production of wealth will be the task and privilege of the various industrial unions (mining, transportation, textiles, agriculture, construction, etc.); distribution, the job of cooperatives, communes and territorial units (in co-ordination, of course, with the unions); and other aspects of political and social life will be taken care of by the many and various communal, local, social, cultural and educational groupings.

It cannot of course be expected that human beings will have the abilities and moral qualities necessary to make a Libertarian Communist society function smoothly and efficiently or that these new social institutions will miraculously blossom forth the day after the great social upheaval — unless people get, beforehand, some basic training and understanding of the difficult problems which will confront them in the future. We must now prepare functional units which may serve as a sort of basis for the control and management of production during the period of social reconstruction. Quite naturally the most suitable vehicles for this purpose are the industrial unions, cooperatives and various other revolutionary social and cultural groupings, which today serve the purpose of defending the immediate interests of the working class against the growing exploitation of capitalism and against the stifling intellectual hypocrisy of bourgeois cultural patterns. But these "shells of the new society within the old" must embody in their structure, policies and activities all three of the above-mentioned cornerstones of progressive social life. No true socialism can be built upon foundations which contain anti-socialist, anti-humanitarian pillars. The means must conform with the ends in view.

We cannot conceive of any organization or social institution, be it a political party, a labor union or a cultural body (nor do the lessons of history and the conclusions of logic indicate the contrary) that

is now based on undemocratic, un-equalitarian or anti-revolutionary principles and policies, which could throw off these admittedly undesirable, anti-libertarian aspects when it has become powerful, its personnel entrenched and has fulfilled its present aims. (For example, the American Federation of Labor will never be a revolutionary union; nor will the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, or the Communist Parties ever develop into liberty-loving, equalitarian bodies.) Rather can we expect that these admittedly undesirable features will tend to perpetuate themselves. These are the seeds of degeneration; this is the clue to the failure of the Marxist parties to stop the rising tide of Fascism.

(To be continued)

—S.M. and R.W.

## Labor vs. Politics in France

VAMPED into the clutches of capitalist politics French labor is receiving its kiss of death. Having gone to bed with the Popular Front its blood is being drawn and with it that magnificent militancy and splendid strength which had been demonstrated during 1936. The strikes of June, 1936, before which capital had to retreat for fear that labor would take the logical steps that the inner revolutionary content of its demonstrations demanded, left the Popular Front gasping. It is this fear which drives the socialist, communist, C.G.T. "leaders" of labor into the arms of French capital. This is the inner meaning of the Popular Front: the identification of labor and capital with the "national interests" of France to prepare for the final blood-letting.

The purpose and end of Popular Front politics is, and can be only, the preparation for the coming slaughter — a mere tool in the hands of capitalist madness. To this purpose the Communist Party of France has brought its forces in order to consummate the Franco-Soviet pact which Russian state capitalism wishes so much. The easier to do this it dissolved its dual union, the C.G.T.U. in March, 1936 and merged with the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labor) to form one organization. With the help of the reformist leaders of the C.G.T. it now attempts to drug and render helpless the body of labor.

The "colonizing" work of the Communist Party of France in the C.G.T. has gone far. In the face of its success in this direction the C.G.T. leaders took fright. R. Dupac complains in *Syndicates* (C.G.T.) that the unity has not become a union and that the fusion has been transformed into a colonization. In a circular addressed to the National Federations and the departmental sections Jouhaux, secretary of the C.G.T., deplored the lack of unity in the C.G.T. and called for a strengthening of it. Everybody spoke of the crisis in the C.G.T. in face of the fact that the circular was sent out before the Congress of the National Confederal Committee (C.C.N.) of the C.N.T.

Naive people discovered in Jouhaux a new militancy. It is true that a movement is developing against the subjection of the C.G.T. to political intrigue and betrayal. But Jouhaux is not interested in this vital situation. With a simplicity bordering on stupidity he places the cards on the table and tells us of the "battle between militants for conquest of directorial posts!" He wants to straighten out the difficulties among the leaders — he wants peace among the traitors. "Tendencies", he says "that have disappeared should never be reborn." That is all there is for him.

As *Le Libertaire*, organ of the Anarchist Union of France comments, "It is plain and obvious. It is not upon the 'colon-

izers' that the Confederal Bureau lays the blame: it is upon the syndical minorities who do not wish to allow themselves to be strangled that a repression is being directed." Belin, of the Confederal Committee calls the circular a "stab in the water" and declares that the syndicalists should break a dishonorable silence and that the exchange of vague hypocritical words is a betrayal of syndicalism. He adds: "To allow syndicalism, through incapacity, to pass little by little into control of some political formation is to be condemned by our movement... The syndicates have a right to know where they are being led... because it is the very problem of the future of syndicalism which is posed."

On August 4 the C.C.N. met behind closed doors. It came out and placed itself at the mercy of the government declaring its faith in the good intentions of the government which it declared, wishes and can see to it that syndical rights, workshop delegates be respected. It went on record as supporting compulsory arbitration by the government whose decisions were to be enforced by sanctions. The government, they were confident, would be impartial. And to repay the government for its future benevolence the C.C.N. would feel happy to do what it could to place French capitalism in a better economic position (the leaders of the C.G.T. have already become foremen for French capitalist enterprise as will be shown later).

The government would be impartial! At the *Maison Mi-mard* 1800 striking workers await the application of the collective agreement, at the *Maison Reunis*, at *La Soie* the story is the same. The Union of Metallurgy of the Seine, representing 250,000 workers, has waited since March for readjustment of salaries; the building workers since June. The Executive Commission of the Union of Syndicates of the Paris Region declares, "that if deeds of this kind (such as cited above) continue it would be a confession of du-perie". This is the manner in which the government impartially administers the collective agreements. But the workers organizations do nothing! They cannot take any direct action: Labor has been tied to the governmental machinery.

The internal crisis, by its very nature, could not be solved. The C.P.F. cannot halt in its efforts to gain control of the C.G.T. and hand it over to French capital as a hostage for the Franco-Soviet military pact. Nor has the former militancy of the French workers completely vanished and there is visible an incipient uprising which may come into being if labor does not become too demoralized. The latter process would do just as well for the C.P.F. as it would lessen resistance to its strangle-hold.

The bomb at the C.C.N. congress turned out to be a dud. The groups around *Syndicats* were silent. A proposal was even made to merge "Syndicats" with "Vie Ouvrière" (Communist sheet) which, if carried out, would effectively silence that particular opposition to the C.P. The overthrow of the Blum government was not spoken of. The most vital questions affecting French life were left unmentioned. *Le Combat Syndicaliste*, organ of the C.G.T.S.R. (revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist unions), poses them in deplored the lack of a constructive, working class program of the C.C.N., except insofar as it is a program of betrayal of the worker's interests: "There was nobody in the C.C.N., to our knowledge, to present the true character of the Chautemps ministry whose treachery surpassed that of Tardieu, Laval and Doumerge, as only the transition between the 'Popular Front' and the 'National Front'."

A month later the government answered the proposals of the C.G.T. Chautemps congratulated the organization for its "civic spirit" and for its desire to collaborate in rehabilitating the national economy by guaranteeing social peace on the basis of legal actions. And as a token of this he wished to see, with only the briefest delay, the evacua-

tion of occupied factories. Occupation of factories, explained the Popular Front Premier, was in itself illegal and was "further inadmissible since the government would protect the working class against all violations of collective contract by the employers." The "labor bodies" succumbed to these beautiful words. The establishment in which the violation by the bosses of the collective contract was most flagrant, the S.I.M.C.A., which is under Fascist management, and in which a long, bitter and important sit-in was in progress, was evacuated in two days through the insistence of the union bosses.

The Administrative Council of the C.G.T. lightly and without other consultation pledged the responsibility of the organization, declaring their "unanimous approval of the spirit and terms" of the governmental note!

The C.G.T. has demonstrated the disastrous results of labor tied to the governmental machinery, devoted to "national interests" — to capitalism imperialism. In June 1936 it fought its class enemy on the one field in which it could make positive gains, unhampered by the false though glittering aspects of political considerations. It fought its battle on the economic field with its powerful weapon — the strike. But having gained what it fought for — higher wages, shorter hours, paid vacation, etc. — it sat back. The reformists, the politicians, the Popular Frontists, crept out of hiding or shed their false coats and began their work of binding the workers, and along with the natural reaction of the capitalist economic machinery to recuperate its profits, dissipated the worker's gains. Prices rose, the speed-up was increased, the employers broke their agreements. The workers would have fought back when they realized what was happening, but the leaders would not allow the Popular Front to be embarrassed, the Franco-Soviet pact had to be consummated and workers' battles would be detrimental. French capitalism had to be put in order for the coming slaughter from which, our "comrades" pinned, a new and greater democracy would emerge.

The result, in concrete terms, on the life of the workers is as follows: The price of bread (kg.) has risen from 1fr 80 in 1936 to 2fr30 in 1937, butter from 16fr15 to 22fr15, eggs from 7fr to 9fr75, milk from 1fr20 to 1fr60, beef-steak from 28fr75 to 31fr25, pork from 15fr20 to 20fr5. The price of sugar has had an increase of 1fr10, coffee 1fr20, chocolate 2fr20, wine 0fr80, oil 0fr80, soap 1fr95. A staple list of 45 grocery articles has shown a rise in the price index from a base of 100 on September 26, 1936 to 143 on July, 1937. Not only has the rise in the cost of living wiped out the effect of the wage increases, accomplished as a result of the strikes, but the French worker is actually in a worse economic position now than before the strikes.

Now the workers are not even allowed to make back the losses they are suffering, let alone strive for further gains. A general strike of building workers was announced with loud blasts. But Jouhaux disowned it and the leaders of the federation of building workers called it off. Announcement is made that a general strike would be called in Dunkirk. It is widely heralded. The next notice received is that "the strike will not take place." And so on until it has become the accepted routine. As *Le Compt Syndicaliste* puts it, "We live in the period of aborted strikes." The workers losses remain. Demoralization spreads. To call for a strike, to display militancy, is to be labeled "provocateur", "agent in the pay of the bosses", "Trotskyist spy of the Gestapo". In the face of the workers crying needs one is advised to be "supple".

The struggle for the 40-hour week was to achieve the double purpose of relaxation for the workers and to open the way for employment for the unemployed. But the 40 hour week has only led to a speed-up which leaves the worker in the same physical state as when he worked longer hours. Even *La Revue Syndicale et Sociale* (C.G.T.) points

to "the rationalization which has permitted an increase in individual productivity of 14% in one year and thus render negligible the beneficial effects of the 40-hour week". Not only will the speed-up prevent re-employment but it will necessarily throw employed workers into the ranks of unemployed because the increased production will find the masses with no purchasing power to absorb it. The result will be disastrous. Blum, Chautemps, Thorez and the others faithfully obey the order of French capital in demanding increased production on the part of the workers in payment for the 40-hour week... To the demand of the employers and the government, the C.G.T. lends its whip. Each day the C.G.T. exhorts the workers to produce more. Yesterday it was the Federation of Metal Workers; today it is Jouhaux and Belin. *Vie Ouvrière* (Communist) proudly reports the statement at the convention of the Union of Syndicates of Drôme and Ardeche "that never has the C.G.T. been favorable to a slowing down of production but, on the contrary, it has shown in many undertakings a more intensive production and a peaceful relationship between workers and employers which has led to a stimulation of the economic revival". (sic!)

A resurgence of the anti-political, direct action traditions of French labor is the only way out. And hopes for such a resurgence are not ill-founded. Combined with a growing natural revulsion to all political parties on the part of many workers, the agitation and actions of the Anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations is beginning to take effect. The latest bomb plot framé-ups aimed at suppressing the Anarchist movement in France merely prove to what extent French capital fears the growth of a movement that is really revolutionary.

JACK WHITE

## Unions and Leaders

To build a labor movement that will fulfill the requirements of state capitalism, it becomes necessary to organize all the workers in the mass production industries into unions which can be manoeuvred by a dictatorial apparatus. The control of the union by its members, the adoption of militant class-war tactics, the infiltration of revolutionary principles must be prevented. Unions uncontrolled by the reactionary leaders would get beyond control, would threaten the very existence of the profit system. Any attempts on the part of the rank-and-file of the union to wrest control from the ruling bureaucracy must be nipped in the bud.

This explains the proceedings at the recent convention of the United Automobile Workers of America. The conduct of the leadership at that convention can be understood when we consider the fact that General Motors, Chrysler and other companies hesitate to sign a contract with the union until such time as the leaders of the union can show that they possess the power to control the "unruly" membership who persist in calling "unauthorized" strikes. The issues involved at the convention of the auto union revolved around the principles of democracy versus dictatorship and the convention split on this issue. The "progressives" were headed by the officialdom, Homer Martin, president and Richard Frankensteen, vice-president, the mouthpieces of Lewis whose orders they faithfully obeyed.

Their right to complete dictatorship of the union was challenged by the "unity" faction which was headed by the Reuther brothers, Travis Mortimer and others. The delegates of the "unity" group were representative of a far-flung and profound discontent with the structure and policies of the union. They demanded that locals choose their own officials, that dues collected in the locals be more

evenly distributed between the locals and the national office which had been receiving most of the money collected. They opposed the centralization of the power in the hands of the staff officers and the executive committee. They demanded that strikes be called and settled by the membership and not by the officeholders who sign agreements first and then present the members with a "fait accompli". Things got so hot for the "progressive" reactionaries that Lewis himself was called from Washington to prevent the organization from passing beyond control and undermining his power and prestige. With the aid of Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers and Ora Gassaway of the United Mine Workers the machine emerged victorious. Of the seven staff officers the "progressives" control four. Of the seventeen members of the executive they control thirteen. Under the new constitution the powers of the president are increased. He does hiring and firing of officers and together with his appointees controls the organization. Conventions are to be held bi-annually instead of annually as had been demanded by the "unity" group.

As a result of this victory of the officialdom, a purge of all left wing elements and a red-baiting spree is taking place. Ten organizers including Victor Reuther and Robert Travis were fired by Martin. They were the leaders of the militant Flint Local, and were severely criticized for sit-down strikes that occurred after the agreement was signed with General Motors. The affairs of the Flint local were left to the control of a committee of five appointed by Martin. When the rank and file of the Detroit locals called on Martin at his hotel and demanded an explanation of this high-handed procedure, the suave ex-minister of the gospel brandished a gun, that classic argument of union gangsterism and corruption.

This outrageous violation of the most elementary rights of the membership was hysterically applauded by the lick-spittle "progressives" the Communist Party, the Lovestoneites and their ilk. They supported the labor fakers while the rank and file were left to battle alone.

The role of the "progressives" in the C.I.O. is a shameful one. This is shown by their activities everywhere, and especially in the Maritime industry on the west coast.

The Maritime Federation of the Pacific represents 40,000 militant workers and embraces all the maritime unions. It has succeeded in raising the standard of living of the seamen to a higher level than has ever been attained before. The existence of the Federation is seriously threatened by the National Maritime Union (Communist controlled) as well as by the A. F. of L.

The N.M.U. is connected with the C.I.O. The N.M.U. declared that the time is ripe to "liquidate" the Federation. This is being done by Harry Bridges who was appointed by Lewis to corral the workers into the C.I.O. It matters not to Lewis or to Bridges that the Federation has won more than one epic strike and that they are organized on the basis of solidarity. All that the C.I.O. is out for is to take the union into its own hands. The same Harry Bridges who declared on April 11, 1937 that, "Anyone who advocates joining the C.I.O. or withdrawing from the A. F. of L. is a disrupter of labor, a union splitter, a phoney, a ship-owners' agent", is now the appointed director of the C.I.O. on the west coast. He follows the party line to a "T". If he is not a Communist he deserves honorable membership in the Party. He invariably adapts his policies to the party "line". Now that the N.M.U. calls for "liquidation" of the Maritime Federation he does the same. When the party "line" called for condemnation of the C.I.O. and praise for the Maritime Federation he praised it. Truly a willing slave to the "Leaders" of the labor movement.

SAM WEINER

# The F.A.I. Speaks

## To the International Libertarian Movement

WE consider it our duty to explain the true situation in Spain to the Anarchists in other countries. The pressure of time, the continuous absorption of our energies in the immediate and urgent problems of the civil war and of the revolution that is now under way has prevented us from establishing the necessary contact with the Anarchists throughout the world, in order to avoid many of the errors and to oppose the many misinterpretations of the Spanish problems.

### Position of the Spanish Anarchists

How much has been said, and how many criticisms made, against the position adopted by the Spanish Anarchists since July 19th! We cannot give a detailed account of the causes and effects of our position in this report, which is also an appeal to militant Anarchism in all countries. We only want to make one categoric statement: Spanish Anarchism has not modified its principles by one iota, and has accepted the responsibility of Power, and the holding of Power, as a misfortune created, not by the Revolution that the working class is making, but by the war and the necessity of maintaining the unity of the anti-fascist block. We accepted it because only our dynamism, our faith in the people and the trust that the masses had in us, could inspire the enthusiasm that the fighters needed, in their position of inferior armament, in order to face their difficulties, in which the spirits of the other sectors faltered, threatening to abandon the struggle to the pressure of the enemy...

If we wanted to speak out, we could say much... With a sense of responsibility that the other sectors do not have, we have kept silent in the face of destruction of the work accomplished by the peasants in the agricultural collectives, and carried out under the inspiration of the communists maneuvering frantically for the annihilation of our Movement. They stopped on time because they realized how suicidal was their policy, and because they learned soon enough that ours was not a force to be easily destroyed. We kept silent when we lost Bilbao, victim of the blackest betrayals. When Santander fell, only two C.N.T.-F.A.I. companies fought to the bitter end, while the others either fled or arranged for the surrender of the city. We are still keeping silent when we reject all responsibility for those unfortunate events, which were taking place at the same time as the absurd attacks against the revolutionary conquests of the people. And the latter, now more than ever, are turning to us and placing all their hopes in us.

We are where we have always been, richer, if possible, in the tremendous lessons of an incomparable experience, and in the certainty that we shall follow our road with a firmer step than ever if the more immediate and more dangerous enemy, fascism, is crushed and the revolution is not throttled by the hordes of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.

For us, as well as for the Anarchists of the entire world, the most important, the most basic question, is and should be that of the life or death of the cause of liberty throughout the world, that fascism does not triumph, that the only hope for liberty in Europe, SPAIN, be not suppressed, and thereby allow humanity to sink abruptly into the darkness of the Middle Ages. If that were to happen, would not our Anarchist principles be relegated to the limbo, condemned to death and disappearance, brought to its collapse by social democracy, which, vacillating and cowardly, prepared and permitted the triumph of fascism in Italy and Germany.

as well as by communism, which did not know how to organize the great masses of the world proletariat under its control in a revolutionary manner, sacrificing them to the necessities and the interests of their international policies in the face of the Japanese threat, and betraying them for the historic tragedy of a Russo-British Alliance such as Pan slavism has always pursued from Peter the Great to Stalin?

For the Spanish Anarchists, for all Anarchists with a realistic spirit and a general understanding of our problems, the essential, the fundamental task is to defeat fascism, to fight the totalitarian States, to arouse the revolutionary spirit of the wage-earning masses.

### ***What we ask of the Anarchists and of all men of free conscience***

Once again we ask: understanding of our drama, of our struggle, of our efforts.

The entire resistance against fascism depends upon us. Thanks to us, who have suffered so many injuries and so much injustice, including even illegal persecutions on the part of our political opponents, the Cains who forget their origin and raise an armed fist against us, preferring to risk the loss of the war rather than permit Anarchism to strengthen its positions and continue being the greatest force in Spain; thanks to us, we repeat, the anti-fascist block is being maintained. We are keeping it up, not only for what it represents in our country, but for the example it offers to other countries, threatened by fascist aggression in the near future. Anti-fascist unity, the pact of non-aggression and of mutual aid against the enemy, fascism. Sealed with the blood of the July fighters, left republicans, socialists, communists, and Anarchists, we want to keep it at all costs.

It is the lever that can save us, the given line, the possibility of victory in the cause of liberty throughout the world. If others, guilty, conscienceless, break it or threaten it, we don't want that guilt to be ours.

We ask for the international aid of all men of free conscience, of all workers of independent mind. We ask them to help mobilize and intensify the moral and material support for Spain along the lines laid down by the Anarchists.

We have a right to give the workers of the world our opinion regarding aid for Spain. Although we are grateful for all the aid given us, for the outburst of romanticism that brought so many workers of brain and brawn to fight on our soil in the International Brigades and in the Anti-fascist Militia, working in the munitions factories and enthusiastically supporting all the activities and aspects of the struggle, there was a job to be done that International Anarchism did not do, that the revolutionary workers abroad did not do. Far better than the solidarity of individuals who had come to our land would have been direct action against fascism carried out abroad. Better and more effective, organized and calculated, converted into an expansion of the Revolution capable of wounding the enemy by a flank attack and in the rear to such an extent that it would have greatly impeded the arming of Franco's fascist hosts, and the absolute impudence of Italy and Germany.

These words are not an accusation. They are a recognition of an error on the part of the international revolutionary movement, that can always be repaired. Let the Anarchists in Europe and America think this over. Let the masses of anti-fascist workers in general who do not know what to do to help us consider these words carefully.

If we triumph, comrade Anarchists throughout the world, the radius of influence of universal Anarchism will be saved in spite of everything, re-invigorated, extended. If we are conquered, everything goes down with us, Europe sinks into a night of slavery, of misery, of retrogression to elem-

entary forms of social organization, the workers chained to the monstrous machine of the State and converted into its most docile instrument. Let us save ourselves together, let us fight together for our salvation, and let us discuss our errors tomorrow, if we have made them; or yours, if we prove to be on the right road.

For the World Social Revolution! For Victory over Fascism! For the complete emancipation of the workers! For Anarchism!

**THE PENINSULAR COMMITTEE OF THE F.A.I.**  
Valencia, September, 1937

## **Spain at the Crossroads**

WITH the tragic loss of heroic Asturias to Franco's bararians, Spain enters the most decisive phase of its revolution, both in respect to the military fight against Fascism and the defense of the libertarian social revolution in Loyalist territory. While in the political sphere the working class has suffered serious defeats, its economic and social advances are as yet for the most part in the hands of the proletarian organizations. The question in the minds of most of us is whether the revolution can be saved and experience a resurgence. We make no claims to being prophets. But we can at least note the latest developments of the factors that are significant in determining which way the pendulum is swinging.

First, let us remember that while the social revolution suffered a general decline, there were some organs of proletarian and peasant power which kept on growing in scope and importance. Noteworthy among these was the revolutionary Council of the autonomous Aragon province which made remarkable progress in coordinating and advancing the brilliant work of agrarian collectivization in that region. It was not until two months ago that the central government dared to touch the Aragon Council. When the latter was dissolved to give way to a Valencia appointed outfit, the Valencia government had to resort to character assassination to implement its baseless charges against the Council, so Joaquin Ascaso, Anarchist president of the Council was imprisoned on trumped-up charges of embezzlement. But his release was quickly effected by a threat of a general strike by the C.N.T. (the anarcho-syndicalist labor unions). This threat of direct action is just one of the numerous illustrations that could be given of the tremendous unreleased latent energy of the revolutionary working class of Spain.

There is now arising a new revolutionary bloc of workers and peasants and an accumulating anti-Stalinist sentiment within virtually every anti-Fascist group in Spain.

The pressing need for unity among the Spanish workers, which expressed itself in united action on the streets and barricades, in the joint operation of factories and farm collectives by C.N.T. and U.G.T. unions, saw great progress in the historic Unity Pact between the C.N.T. and U.G.T. signed on August 8, 1937. The rage of the Communist Party knew no bounds. Their newspapers and orators fumed and raved at this great step towards labor unity and demagogically urged that unity was impossible without a common political aim and proposed, instead of labor unity, a single "anti-Fascist" political party to include all "anti-Fascists" in Spain. The aftermath of the signing of this pact of non-aggression and mutual cooperation is eloquent testimony of the extent to which the Spanish proletariat has become disgusted with Stalinism and all it implies. The Pact was not quite as welcome to all sections of the U.G.T. as it was to the Caballero wing (which includes three-fourths of the membership). Many of the newly-formed locals of the U.G.T.

especially in Catalonia, consists entirely of small businessmen and shopkeepers. They refused to abide by this pact and were expelled from the U.G.T. The Communist right wing took this opportunity to satisfy their frenzy by splitting the U.G.T. in good "third period" style. A rump U.G.T. "expelled" Caballero and formed a new "executive" committee. The Spanish people are becoming fed up with this disruptive "unity".

The C.N.T. is not sleeping while the attack on the revolution is going on. Its present policy of watchful waiting and gathering of forces seems to be yielding fruit. On August 21, 1937 a dramatic portrayal of the extent of the feeling against Stalinist dictatorial, anti-revolutionary practices was given in a long letter to the Minister of Justice protesting against the "Communist Party in Albacete" because, "These Communist Party elements, together with others who had come from Valencia — carried on to such a degree with their policy of abuse and outrage that the entire police force was on the point of handing in their badges — They only refrained from doing so because of the inevitable conflict that would necessarily arise." — This letter was signed by the following anti-Fascist organizations in Albacete: U.G.T., C.N.T., F.A.I., F.I.J.L., Left Republican Party, Socialist Party, United Socialist Youth and Republican Unionists! This does not mean, of course, that the danger to the war and the social revolution represented by Soviet Russia and the Spanish C.P. no longer exists. Stalinist control of arms means dependence upon the Soviet Union, now the policeman of British Imperialism.

More and more are the Spanish people, especially the more liberal groups, beginning to realize the danger of the Stalinist strangle-hold. Their latest plan for the formation of a totalitarian party in Loyalist Spain has met with serious rebuffs. The stench of this proposal must have been strong indeed to have evoked vigorous protest by Premier Juan Negrin. It may even be significant that Negrin made this comment in the course of radio speech in which he discussed the fall of Gijon. The New York Times (October 23, 1937) reports about Negrin's speech: "From the internal viewpoint his most important statement was that the government did not approve the widespread campaign to establish a single unified anti-Fascist party. The principle was too much like Fascism, he said, and was not democracy for which the government was fighting".

We cannot, of course, place much faith in governmental assurances. For, even now some of the lawyers who are defending the imprisoned P.O.U.M.ists and Anarchists have been arrested by Stalinist police. This is what happens when international pressure relaxes. The power of such pressure cannot be overestimated. When the French Minister of the Interior tried to repatriate all Spanish refugees, a resolution of protest from a mass meeting of 50,000 public service workers forced him to modify his decree. The next logical step is direct action by organized labor all over the world to stop shipments of arms to Franco territory and to force our governments to abandon the treacherous "non-intervention" which had done more to help Franco than any other factor.

Whatever one may think of the tactical policies of the Spanish revolutionists, it is plain that now the possibility of resurgence is greater than ever before and that now more than ever the militant solidarity of the working class and of anti-Fascists everywhere is needed to save the revolution from Franco and Stalin. Success depends as much on the support and solidarity they can get from the international proletariat as it does upon the correctness of the tactical line followed by the Spanish revolutionary Vanguard. Let us prepare to do our share of the job. One of our cardinal principles is that revolution cannot be accomplished by one country alone. Let us, then, show our internationalism.

S. MORRISON

# Open Letter to Anarchists

October 10, 1937

## Comrades:

Several years ago a suggestion that the Anarchists should arrive at a definite union policy would have been received coldly by the greater part of the American movement. Today, fortunately, most of us realize that unless we do strike an independent course, we will lose forever the great opportunity for organization which the present era offers. It has become clear to most of the active comrades that if Anarchism is to be on the order of the day, a program of activity must be entered upon that will place unionism on a revolutionary syndicalist basis.

In the past we have permitted unfortunate things to happen. The debacle which occurred in the needle-trades unions several years ago during the struggle between the Communists and Socialists for control, may be blamed directly on the fact that no independent policy had ever been enunciated by the comrades in the union. Unfortunately, there were many who opposed such a move. They did not understand that as long as there were Anarchists in the unions, they must at least be guided by Anarchist ethics and have a position which is dictated by the logical implication of Anarchist beliefs.

At present in the struggle between the leaders of the C.I.O. and those of the A.F.O.F.L. it becomes again imperative to sound a warning against taking sides, against following blindly in the footsteps of other "radicals" and "progressives" who look approvingly, with their own special motives in mind, at the C.I.O.

These self-appointed saviors of humanity had for years bewailed the conservative outlook and temper of the American workers. Nothing existed here like the German pre-Hitler labor movement with its fine organization, strict discipline, and incidentally, the well paid union jobs for clever hungry socialistically inclined intellectuals, with its government connections, enormous treasures, life insurance, etc. The ambitions of these people are unfortunately approaching realization. The C.I.O. has become their star in heaven and they are hitching up to it in extreme haste "on the ground floor."

We should not be misled by certain elementary progressive features among the workers of the C.I.O. movement. The American labor movement may have lacked the magnitude, party control and strict discipline which graced the German movement, but it always did have attributes which were anathema to the master tacticians of labor politics. Revolutionary initiative, spontaneity, aggressiveness and democracy were the formidable obstacles to the desires of these power loving emancipators of the exploited. These are the very instincts which build not the impotent headless colossus of the Reich, but the gallant fighting revolutionary unions like the C.N.T. of Spain. The history of American labor is replete with examples of dynamic struggles. The I.W.W. arose not under the well-planned tutelage of a political bureau but in direct opposition to those elements who in Europe dragged their "trained" masses after them into the great slaughter. Today, the apathy resulting from several years of prosperity has worn off; illusions that Roosevelt would solve all problems have been largely destroyed. Decaying capitalism, slowly rebuilding its profits by raising the cost of living, is doing its share in stirring up resentment. The wave of strikes that started three years ago is reaching new levels.

However, these resurgent militant tendencies of labor, which in former days brought about the organization of independent revolutionary unions, are being made use of by the C.I.O. whose leaders understand perfectly the possibil-

ties of the movement if they do not take it in hand. "The workers of this country are going to organize, and if they are not permitted to organize under the banner of the A. F. of L., they are going to organize under some other leadership... or without leadership. And if either of these conditions should eventuate, I submit to you that it would be a far more serious problem for our government, for the people of this country and for the A. F. of L. itself than if our organization should be so molded that we can organize them and bring them under the leadership of this organization." (Chas. P. Howard, present C.I.O. chief at the 1935 A. F. of L. Convention.) Steps have been taken to utilize this movement by the C.I.O. whose leadership consists of ambitious labor politicians, men whose personal records would have discredited them in any decent workingmen's organization.

If we were definite in our conviction that the A. F. of L. could not be reformed, we can be doubly sure that the C.I.O. which multiplies many times the evils that exist in the old craft unions, can never be freed from the merciless hold which the labor racketeers have on it. Only the rebuilding of these unions on a new revolutionary basis can assure the successful reconstruction of society. Libertarians differ fundamentally with Marxists in their attitude toward mass organizations. Unions should not be the stepping stones to political power, but basic organizations of control and management of the economic system of the future. It is toward the full realization of this program that we must orient our present policy.

Moreover, the attitude of many anarchists towards the I.W.W. must be changed. The I.W.W. represents most closely in America the type of revolutionary union we are talking about. Our comrades should support the I.W.W. and help to build it up. Those among us who are in the I.W.W. should do their best to get others to follow the same course.

The task of deciding a specific policy can only be undertaken by those active union comrades who are convinced that a definite union policy based on the revolutionary principles of Anarchism is necessary. Through comradely discussion, definite plans and tactics should be formulated, and Anarchist cadres started in unions with a well planned program of activity and propaganda.

The general policy must consider the role of revolutionary unions in reconstruction, and their roles in present day capitalist society. The forces of degeneration at work in present C.I.O. and A. F. of L. unions should be taken account of. Models of revolutionary unions must be placed before the workers. Years of uncompromising struggle against the bureaucracy, years of ground work in preparation for the building of revolutionary unions must precede the winning of great masses of workers. Let us not be frightened by the cry of dual unionism. No misplaced sense of union solidarity should prejudice us against the policy of building a real labor movement in this country. Incidentally, where are those who so short a time ago cried out against the "dual unionists"? The self-same union racketeers who bellowed against dual unions are building them today. The self-same union "progressives" who echoed them, are strangely preserving silence.

American traditions (we do not mean those owned jointly by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Communist Party) show us what a tremendous Libertarian movement could grow up in America if the ground was properly tilled. But we anarchists are as yet too disorganized, both in respect of basic tenets and organizationally, to take advantage of the opportunity now presented. Before any constructive work can be undertaken in the field of labor, unification of libertarian forces must be accomplished. This work is particularly urgent now in view of the struggle between the C.I.O. and A. F. of L. Let us not be drawn into the conflict, and certainly not choose between the two evils.

We should mass our forces in both organizations and with patient labor lay the foundations for revolutionary unions. With our help American labor will discover that both C.I.O. and A. F. of L. are obstacles to its emancipation, that only revolutionary Anarcho-syndicalism points the way to social reconstruction.

ROMAN WEINREB

## EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 2)

must be combatted with all our energy. If this fascistic treatment of *Man!* and its editor is allowed to pass, a firm foothold will be given to the capitalist reaction for further and wider attacks against elementary civil rights and liberties, the major victim of which will be militant organized labor.

The Southern California Branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, supported by a provisional committee of well-known local liberals, artists and authors, has just issued the formal call for enlarging the recently formed Marcus Graham Freedom of the Press Committee into a nation-wide organization, inviting editors, authors and artists throughout the country to join the Committee as honorary members. Labor organizations must take the lead by forming branches of the committee all over the country to end these Nazi-style persecutions. Who knows who may be next?

Every one wishing to aid in the work of this Committee, morally as well as materially, should address

Marcus Graham Freedom of the Press Committee  
The American Civil Liberties Union  
129 West Second Street, Los Angeles, Calif.

### In Reply

In the October issue of *Man!* the VANGUARD is charged with inconsistency on the ground of having attempted a critical analysis of the tactical line of the Spanish Anarchists while qualifying an allegedly similar analysis undertaken by *Man!* about a year ago as inspired by "revolutionaryism of an ivory tower kind". The similarity, however, is such only in appearance. A concrete analysis of the specific conditions and difficulties under which the Spanish comrades have to struggle has very little to do with purely abstract criticism, that is, one entirely divorced from concrete historic reality. We are of the opinion that the specific conditions of the Spanish struggle called for far-going compromises, that "a pure Anarchist line" would be suicidal under such conditions. But there are compromises and compromises! And we believe that we have a right to examine, for our own elucidation at least, the entire tactical line heretofore pursued by our comrades in the light of such a distinction. To start with the defeatist premise that "war (referring to the present struggle against Fascist invaders) always has been a tomb, never the means of a revolution" — and in spite of the fact that this "war" has already become a powerful wedge for revolutionary conquests of transcending historic significance — is, in our opinion, a manifestation of an "ivory tower" attitude toward the Spanish revolution. And the VANGUARD disclaims any change in its evaluation of such an attitude.

SUBSCRIBE TO

"VANGUARD"

Only \$1.00 per year

